

or future training initiatives would put my soldiers in harm's way without the requisite training; under cutting both their confidence and ability to perform in combat and my ability to accomplish the mission.

10. Impacts if 2/25 SBCT must stop Transformation. The transformation of 2nd BDE to a SBCT is an integral component of Army transformation. I want to re-emphasize the importance of maintaining this training glide path in preparation for our deployment to combat. Our Army SBCTs are the largest combat brigades in our force structure today. They are enormously complex and are unlike any other organization that we have had in the history of our Army. There is a significant learning curve that all members of the brigade must overcome before they become a combat ready member of the unit. To that end, each of our combat infantry companies consist of about 168 Soldiers and our infantry battalions consist of about 670 Soldiers; again, the total authorization for the SBCT is 3,999 personnel. We estimate that our SBCT has roughly 6,000-7,000 dependants that live with and support our service members everyday. Any change or disruption to our transformational training strategy by way of additional deployments for training to the mainland prior to our combat deployment will significantly affect the large number of dependants noted above. Further, the impact on our children's education,

employment of our spouses; the potential hardship of an early return of dependents to the mainland due to unforeseen and extended deployments for training prior to our planned combat deployment are too large and costly to accurately measure.

Disruptions in the 2/25 SBCT training strategy will increase the deployed tempo of the Soldiers in this SBCT and will place additional stress on our Soldiers' dependents. The "normal" combat deployment to Iraq, which is where we believe we will be deployed, is approximately twelve months. The 172d Stryker Brigade that was deployed to Iraq has been extended past twelve months with a yet unknown redeployment date. With continuous combat operations the likely norm for the foreseeable future, it is imperative that we reduce the time that our service members spend away from home prior to executing extended known combat deployments. We need to limit the pre-combat deployment training exercises away from Schofield Barracks, Hawaii to provide our Soldiers with the rest, predictable work schedule and healthy family conditions they need to serve our Nation and Army effectively.

The time potentially spent in transit to and at training areas and ranges in the continental U.S. results in our Soldiers spending large amounts of time away from home, friends, and family before they deploy for a year-long combat operation. This only exacerbates an already stressful deployment period for at least one

full year that this brigade, like others in our Army, has to accommodate. Soldiers, on average, deploy approximately every other year for a year or more. Many Soldiers in the 2ND SBCT are preparing for their second and in some cases, their third deployment to combat. Some Soldiers will receive less than one year between deployments. Family life for Soldiers in 2nd SBCT is already strained. The Army and the 2/25 SBCT leadership are committed to reducing burdens on Soldiers and their loved ones. We recognize that requiring Soldiers to train at locations far from home can compound the stress of past and future deployments. Some amount of training outside Oahu is inevitable and necessary to provide the training our Soldiers need. However, we owe it to our Soldiers, who volunteered to protect this country, to protect their personal time and family life whenever possible. Training in Hawaii meets that objective by limiting time away from home and family, while at the same time providing the training necessary to maximize survival and effectiveness on the battlefield.

11. Leader Challenges and Impacts on Unit Family Members and Soldiers.

The current level of training and repetitive deployments present daunting leadership challenges. Our soldiers and their families do not have an inexhaustible reservoir of energy, resources, patience or understanding. They have an expectation

about what time they have together, what time they will be separated, and how to prepare for these periods. If those expectations are disrupted due to the requirement for extended surprise separations to train outside of Hawaii or to relocate entire units, there will be a direct, adverse impact on good order and discipline with 2/25 SBCT's soldiers and commanders. New, unexpected long terms training deployments will lead to more family problems and family emergencies. This, in turn, leads to more requests for emergency leaves. Soldiers will be less focused on the mission, endangering themselves and others. Discipline problems will rise and morale will decline. As a result, units will lose personnel during key periods during training and later in combat and therefore will be less effective as a whole. Commanders' authority will suffer due to the requirement to address these problems instead of focusing more exclusively on accomplishing the mission. This adverse impact can be expected to affect the entire 2/25 SBCT.

I recognize that as a result of the recent court decision, a number of training venues and facilities are not available for my Brigade. While it will be difficult, if allowed to receive and train with my full compliment of Stryker equipment on currently existing ranges augmented by the completion and full use of a minimal number of new ranges and facilities (Range 11 on Pohakuloa, Qualification

Training Range One, the SBCT Motor Pool, the Urban Assault Course, the Tactical Vehicle Wash and the Multiple Deployment Facility), I believe I will be able train this Brigade and meet the combat readiness requirements and expectations of my soldiers and their family members.

12. As I noted above, the 2/25 SBCT needs access to the terrain here in Hawaii because it is so similar to many of the locations that we may be called to fight in here in the Pacific and in the Middle East. It is the only military installation in the United States that has mountainous rainforests similar to those in the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and Indonesia and the challenging dry desert terrain found on the big island of Hawaii is also akin to the terrain found in the Middle East. Hawaii is the ideal location for Stryker units to use as we navigate the tightly compartmented terrain and mountainous muddy jungle roads here at Schofield Barracks that are replete in the Pacific region. Likewise, the military training areas on the big island of Hawaii provide a superb venue to train all of our combat systems in a desert environment that ideally replicates the harsh conditions that I have experienced during my two deployments to Iraq. Every environment affects the use of our tactics and technology differently and we need to train in each environment to ensure our combat readiness. Dismounted Stryker soldiers interact with their

Stryker vehicles differently in the jungle, where the Strykers will have limited maneuverability, than they will in the open terrain in a desert. Stryker vehicles respond to an ambush on a jungle road differently than in a city or open desert setting. Finally, the confidence that comes from having trained in both jungle and desert environments cannot be overstated. It is our collective responsibility to ensure our young soldiers receive the best and most realistic training experiences possible prior to deploying to combat; Hawaii provides the ideal training conditions to facilitate attaining this objective.

13. The restrictions placed on my Brigade by the Court of Appeals make training exceptionally difficult and if continued will render this unit combat ineffective as a Stryker Brigade. We cannot use our vehicles or vehicle-mounted digitally enhanced weapons systems. While my soldiers are motivated and are conducting common skills task training and other generic training, we can only do this for so long. The 2/25 SBCT is a state of the art combat brigade. This brigade, and the other Stryker Brigades in our Army, are "graduate level" organizations when compared to the legacy brigades that exist in the U.S. Army force structure. I cannot overemphasize the complexity of this unit and the need to keep all of our training synchronized on our current transformational timeline. Every day we lose training with our Stryker vehicles means a longer day later to

make up this training. There are no "spare" days in the schedule to meet our deployment availability date. The court's order also increases the stress on my soldiers and their families. Their future is now uncertain. As I have already noted, it is difficult enough to prepare soldiers and their families for war. To insert even more anxiety into their lives cannot help but extract a toll.

14. Conclusion. We are a Nation at war. Lessons learned in combat have made it clear that there is a direct correlation between training, combat effectiveness, casualty rates and victory. Maintaining our current transformation and training plan is essential to preparing 2/25 SBCT and my Soldiers for the pending combat deployment. The inability of 2/25 SBCT to complete its transition to a SBCT will result in less effective units and Soldiers in combat. Less effective units and Soldiers will translate to higher casualty rates in combat which is absolutely unacceptable and morally wrong. Higher casualty rates in combat adversely impact the overall effort in the Global War on Terrorism and make victory harder to attain.

Further, alternative training locations are financially impractical given that none of the associated costs are currently programmed, and requiring their use will adversely impact upon Soldier and family morale. As mentioned earlier, training here in Hawaii and operating on the associated jungle terrain is

significant in that it allows the SBCT to be better prepared to support the full range of potential deployment requirements for both the Pacific region and the Middle East. Schofield Barracks optimizes the Pacific region training requirements and PTA is a great training area that replicates the dry and tough conditions found in the Middle East. Fighting in the Pacific region or the Middle East are both very real possibilities given what all of us are seeing on the Korean peninsula.

As mentioned previously, our new weapons stabilization and accuracy upgrades provides this SBCT with an unprecedented capacity for precise weapons gunnery in training and combat. These new capabilities will reduce collateral damage in training and in combat; this is a significant improvement in our capability in terms of protecting key areas of terrain (Mosques, burial grounds, etc), important infrastructure and non-combatants on the battlefield.

Moreover, the Stryker vehicles are the quietest and most environmentally compliant armored vehicle the Army has ever developed. Combine these attributes with those noted above and it is readily apparent that we have made significant enhancements in our combat capabilities as well as simultaneously ensuring that we are good neighbors here in Hawaii.

Finally, a mandatory permanent change-of-station (PCS) at this late juncture in our transformation process for Soldiers and family members within the established three-year life-cycle period of the brigade would be morally wrong and will violate the numerous re-enlistment & legally binding contracts that the Army has made with Soldiers regarding their stationing in Hawaii. It is therefore imperative that 2/25 SBCT be allowed to continue to transform in an uninterrupted manner in Hawaii prior to deployment to Iraq in early 2008.

I declare under penalty of perjury that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief.



Stefan J. Banach

Colonel, U.S. Army



Date